



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

For Release: **IMMEDIATE**
Date: April 11, 2003

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**GOV. EASLEY DIRECTS STATE OFFICIALS TO INCREASE LAGOON INSPECTIONS,
WORKS TO PREVENT WASTE SPILLS IN LIGHT OF RECENT RAINS**

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to step up its inspections of animal waste lagoons impacted by the recent rains and to take aggressive action against serious violators. He commended livestock farmers who have reported elevated lagoon levels and have voluntarily removed animals but warned those that have failed to report problems or have violated other environmental regulations that they will see enforcement action.

“We are grateful for the recent rains that are helping our communities rebound from the prolonged drought,” Easley said. “But these rains are also presenting a potential problem on too many of the animal farms that use waste lagoon systems.

“I appreciate those farmers who are conscientious and are working with DENR to report high lagoon levels and to bring problems under control. As for those growers who are not responsible and fail to report serious problems, the state will take swift and aggressive action against them.”

DENR’s Division of Water Quality (DWQ) is conducting flyovers as weather permits and is responding to complaints and reports it receives. DWQ will conduct additional flyovers next week. The division is assessing fines against those operators who have had discharges, sprayed on wet fields or have failed to report insufficient freeboard levels. Notices of violations will also be sent to all farms whose freeboard levels are above allowable limits. More than 300 farms have reported problems and animals have been removed from 10 swine operations.

“State environmental inspectors have been putting in long hours canvassing their regions, doing spot checks and responding to complaints. I thank them for their efforts,” said Easley.

DENR is using a process that Easley established as attorney general in which lawyers from the Attorney General’s Office and state environmental inspectors demand timely and effective action to prevent or respond to a serious environmental threat at a hog farm.

“When lagoon levels are too high and the soil is saturated, we need to take quick action to ensure that we do not have discharges that endanger our environment,” Easley said. “While we hope that farmers will continue cooperate and take the necessary steps to prevent overflows, including depopulation, we are ready to take court action if needed.”